

SERMON
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Called to BE the Church (Part 1): *Grateful for Our Church*

April 15, 2018

Mark 12:41-44

Watch video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8ZviGS841w&feature=youtu.be>

So, if the United Church Moderator walked in here today, what would tell her?

Would you tell her about our great Seniors' Time Out Luncheon program? Or would you mention our successful *Embrace the Spirit* grant application that enables us to have Lunch N' Learn once a month? Or what about our book club that reaches out into the community by meeting in the library? I think I'd tell her about how I am inspired by our Living Out Loud Youth group that meets every Wednesday.

What would you tell her?

We have so many exciting programs here at Knox, and so many opportunities to be involved.

Let's just hear about some of them – if any one of these apply to you, then stand up:

- I enjoy the Men's Breakfast that meets at Tim Horton's on the first Wednesday of each month.
- I go to the community book club at the library and enjoy discussing what we have read.
- I like to sing in the Praise Band in the worship services every couple of weeks.
- I enjoy the meal at the Seniors Time Out Luncheons.
- I have enjoyed the quiet devotional times of our Jazz Vespers.
- It's great to see the children perform at our Knox Café twice a year.
- The Live Nativity in the community is one of my favorite outreach events.
- I like to connect with my friends at Kindred Spirits, and I enjoy the great variety in the programs.
- I like to get Messy at Messy Church!
- I like to sing in the choir.
- I appreciate the worship services here at Knox.

You see, everyone appreciates Knox for something. We have so much to be grateful for at our church family. We need to tell our stories of Why we support Knox – so, let me suggest that you turn to your neighbor and tell them your answer to the three simple questions:

- What brought you to this church?
- What at church makes you feel grateful?
- Share a memorable experience of either giving or receiving from this church.

Our church is important to us!

But, do we show our appreciation for our church in the way that we financially give to the church? Do we really give from our hearts?

Sometimes we may ask, “well how much are we supposed to give?” It’s a good question. The Old Testament talks about the practice of tithing – 10% of your income. The main principle behind tithing and giving is the fact that what we do with our money, shows where our heart is – which if you think about it, makes a lot of sense – we like to spend our money on what is important to us. Matthew 6:21 says:

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

This practice of tithing does still happen in some churches today. But, in the United Church, the guideline is more – give what you can!

The United Church Planned Giving resources suggest the following guidelines -

Give the same as one hour of your weekly salary, or half a day of your monthly wage.

Give the same as you spend on coffee each week, or eating out each month.

Those are good start line suggestions.

Jesus says – give all that you can. In our scripture today, he reminds us that it is not the amount that you give, but rather the attitude in which you give. The widow gives very little by comparison to others, but she gives from her heart – she gives all that she can give, because it was important to her.

How important is our church and our community of faith to us?

Do we give to it in the same way that we give to other things?

If we look at the list of those other things in our community from our children’s time -how much do we give to those? (show slide)

The average weekly amount that a family of 4 in Waterloo region spends on food, is \$200

The average monthly cost that is spent on health care insurance per person is \$300

The average cost of having a child in hockey is \$1700 per year (second most expensive sport!)

The average cost spent on further education for students away from home is \$20,000 per year!

These could be considered essential costs, but we have just seen how important your church is to you. Don’t you see church, and all the work we do reaching out into the community as an essential cost also?

So, how much are we willing to give financially to our church?

And, let us not forget that costs have increased. We all know that today we spend more on our weekly food shopping bill than we did just 5 years ago. And hydro bills have almost doubled in 10 years. At church, our heat and utilities bill for 2010 was \$ 9653, but for 2017 it was \$13,682.

That is almost 30% more. But, have we all increased our financial offerings to church by 30%? Or do we give the same that we gave 7 years ago?

And, we know that Ayr is a church of folks that like to travel – we like to escape the snow in the winter and head off to cottages in the summer. But even though we are away, the bills of the church still need to be paid. Unfortunately, bills do not take a vacation! Perhaps you realize this, and you choose to double your financially contribution when you return – or maybe it is time for you to consider going on PAR – it’s a way to commit to financially supporting your church with regular giving even when you are away. I encourage to consider that as you take home the insert in your bulletin.

And the reality check is that we also know that in 2018, we have a deficit budget of about \$10,000 – and we are looking at adding the cost of renovations to make our building more accessible for our community.

So, let us take a moment to listen and reflect on what the Spirit is saying to you about our scripture today. Take a moment to be still.

(pause)

Consider all the reasons that you are grateful for Knox.

Consider how important Knox is to you.

At the faith tree, we have some envelopes with different amounts written on them – the larger amounts at the top, and lesser amounts at the bottom. As Nate is playing, I invite you to come forward and prayerfully choose an envelope. You can bring it back next week with your offering, adding your envelope number to the front so you get to benefit with a tax deduction. You might also choose to fill out the PAR form in your bulletin, and hand that into the office, or put it in an envelope and bring it to church next week.

The words of the song that Nate is playing is on the screen, so you are welcome to prayerfully join in.

(music)

Consider all the reasons that you are grateful for Knox.

Consider how important Knox is to you.

Consider increasing your financial support, giving from the heart.

I invite you to take your time, to come forward.